



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore
1100 N. Mineral Springs Road
Porter, Indiana 46304-1299

Frequently Asked Questions Weddings Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore 4/21/2016

The beauty and grandeur of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore makes it a popular location for weddings. Because these ceremonies are not part of the purpose and ordinary use of the park, a Special Use Permit is required. This permit enables the park to assist with the planning of wedding ceremonies while meeting the needs of park resources and visitors. Here is some information for those interested in hosting a wedding ceremony at the park:

Q: Do I need a permit for my wedding at the park?

A: Special Use Permits are required for all wedding ceremonies, regardless of size or duration.

Q: How do I get a permit for my wedding?

A: You can get information regarding the application process from the park website or by calling our permit coordinator 219-395-1859. Please remember that submitting an application does not guarantee approval of the permit. The park website is www.nps.gov/indu. Click on “Plan Your Visit” then “Basic Information” then “Permits & Reservations.”

Q: Does the permit cost anything?

A: There is a fee to apply for the permit. All applications must include a non-refundable check or money order of \$65.00, payable to “National Park Service.” This payment is required to cover the cost of processing the application. Depending upon the scale and complexity of the event, other charges may apply.

Q: What should I put on the application?

A: When completing your application, you should be as specific as possible. The more information you provide regarding your wedding, the easier it is to evaluate your permit request. We cannot process incomplete applications. Missing information can delay the processing of your application. Maps and drawings of the event area are encouraged.

Q: Are there things I should do before completing the application?

A: Before finalizing your wedding plans and completing a permit application, you should come out to the park and scout out the location. Make note of the available parking. Parking is on a first come/first served basis only. Parking cannot be reserved and your party cannot block out parking spaces. During fair weather, parking can fill fast. A permit does not guarantee a parking space.

You should also make note of the terrain and other environmental conditions. Some areas may prove too strenuous for persons with physical limitations. Many locations have limited restroom facilities. Crashing waves can make hearing your ceremony a challenge.

Q: Can I photograph or film my wedding?

A: Absolutely! Still photography with handheld cameras is encouraged. There are some important things related to professional photography/filming you need to know:

If you are planning to use a professional photographer/videographer to record your ceremony, you must indicate so on your permit application. They may only use a handheld still camera or a still camera on a small tripod. If they use reflectors, light sets or other equipment or if they set up props or other staged items, a separate commercial photography permit is required. If you are planning to use a commercial videographer to film/record your special day, a separate permit is required.

The commercial filming/photography permit is the responsibility of the photographer and must be approved and on site at the time of the event. The costs associated with these permits are based upon the number of people and can be significant. Commercial photographers should contact 219-395-1644 for information and application forms.

Q: When and where can I have my wedding in the park?

A: Wedding permits are available year-round. However, due to heavy summer visitation at the beach, some restrictions apply:

- Wedding permits are limited to a period of no more than two hours.
- Persons attending weddings at West Beach are responsible for paying any applicable gate fee.
- To prevent interference with normal visitor use, weddings are permitted at the following locations only. The size of wedding parties is limited as listed for each location:

Location	Summer Permit Hours	Off-Season Permit hours	Maximum Group Size
West Beach	0800-Dusk	0800-Dusk	100+
Portage Lakefront Awning	0800-1000 1800-2000	0800-Dusk	50
Portage Lakefront Overlook	0800-1000 1800-2000	0800-Dusk	20
Portage Lakefront Beach	0800-1000 1800-2000	0800-Dusk	50
Portage Lakefront Classroom	0800-1000 1800-2000	0800-Dusk	50 seated 75 standing
Porter Beach Area	0800-1000 1800-2000	0800-Dusk	100
Kemil Beach Area	0800-1000 1800-2000	0800-Dusk	100
Dunbar Area	0800-1000 1800-2000	0800-Dusk	50
Lakeview Area	0800-1000 1800-2000	0800-Dusk	50
Chellberg Farm	0800-Dusk	0800-Dusk	50

Q: Is there a place that I can hold a reception?

A: While wedding ceremonies are allowed, we do not permit wedding receptions.

Q: Are there limits on what we can do during the wedding?

A: Special Use Permits usually contain a list of conditions and limitations that protect park resources and visitors. Many of these conditions are standard for any permit. Some are specific to weddings. These limitations include:

Standard conditions applicable to weddings

- The permit must be in the possession of the permittee at the time of the event and must be displayed to a park employee upon request.
- Drivers must park in designated areas only. No parking on grass or roadsides. Groups are encouraged to car pool from larger parking areas. Most parking areas will not accommodate long vehicles, so limousines may need to “stage” at another location, outside the park. Staging vehicles in parking lots and driveways outside of a marked parking space is not allowed. Loading and unloading vehicles from any roadway is prohibited.

- With the exception of Portage Lakefront and Riverwalk, electricity is not available. Groups may not use generators and/or portable public address systems. Acoustic musical instruments and/or the use of a small, portable music player is allowed as long as the volume is at a reasonable level (is undetectable beyond the immediate area of the ceremony).
- Metal or wooden folding chairs are unstable on beach sand and are not allowed at those locations. Beach blankets and/or towels are encouraged.
- This permit does not give exclusive use of park areas. The public may not be excluded from the event area. Flagging off areas or otherwise impeding public access to park areas is not allowed.

The following is prohibited:

- ✓ Fireworks, fires, torches, candles or other sources of open flame
- ✓ Throwing/releasing balloons, rice, birdseed or similar
- ✓ Releasing live animals (butterflies, doves, etc.)
- ✓ Glass on the beach
- ✓ Floral arrangements (other than hand-held), signs and banners
- ✓ Tents, tables, banners, signs (including directional signs), and decorations such as balloons, garden arches, carpet runners, etc.
- ✓ Horses and/or horse-drawn vehicles
- ✓ Making unreasonable noise, such as horn honking, dragging tin cans, etc.
- ✓ Collecting of any item or object, including sand, shells, fossils, flowers, grass or other plants